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# American Art Journal.

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## THE ART OF SINGING.

We request the attention of our readers to the few following words which we purpose to say upon a subject which is of no little interest to a large class, including both professors and amateurs. The subject which we allude to is the Art of Singing—an Art but little understood in this community, and but little comprehended in any part of the globe. Singing based upon the proper production of the voice, is a parable, the meaning of which is as obscure to the majority of teachers, as to the green pupils whose voices are sacrificed to a culpable and unnecessary ignorance. The organs by which the voice is formed are so delicate, yet positive in their construction, that the slightest abuse may render them comparatively inoperative, and may permanently destroy a voice which nature has made ready to be moulded by the master's hand, but so sensitive that rough or ignorant treatment will wreck it into fragments, which no art can ever restore in its harmony and integrity.

A knowledge of the Art of Singing, the proper training of the voice, is as much needed to-day by the teachers, in general, as by those who seek them out for instruction. Singers are made every day, but they are marred in the making, robbed of half their natural gifts, by a vicious, unintelligent system of instruction, which has no basis in physiological knowledge of the vocal organs, which are so wonderful, yet so simple in the exquisite adaptation to production of tone.

To disseminate this much-needed knowledge, we have commenced in our columns, a translation by the distinguished artist, Mlle. Camilla Urso, of the celebrated vocal system, prepared for and adopted by the Conservatoire of Paris, by which a large number of the most distinguished artists of Europe have been formed. The system is thoroughly comprehensive, being based upon the fundamental principles which govern the production of the voice; the details are eminently practical, and are so arranged and classified and so clearly stated, that any one seeking after knowledge of the subject cannot fail to gain by a perusal of this system, all the information necessary for his purpose.

The publication of this work we deem of the highest importance, and for that reason we direct the special attention of our readers to it. Though it may not be generally adopted by our teachers, for it is difficult to replace the custom of years by a new system, it cannot fail to broaden their views, and enlighten them upon points which will eventually weed

out errors of long standing, and indirectly and then directly, work a beneficial change in the whole system of vocal instruction.

## ENGLISH OPERA—OLYMPIC THEATRE.

The golden age of English Opera seems to be revived at the Olympic Theatre by "The Richings Opera Company," which commenced a season of three weeks in that elegant house on Monday last, with "Martha," following with "Maritana," "Fra Diavolo," "Don Pasquale" and "La Sonnambula," besides reviving "The Doctor of Alcantara" to make a round half dozen operas in one week.

Extraordinary interest seems to have been entertained by our musical community in the performances by this really excellent company, for on the first three nights the Olympic was crowded beyond its seating capacity and late comers found reserved seats an unattainable luxury to all who had not previously engaged them. We are not surprised at this unusual determination of public favor towards operatic versions, which had, through overworking by incompetent parties become quite unpopular.

Miss Richings' company is effective for the purpose of presenting opera in our vernacular in a pleasing animated dramatic style. The principal artists have been well trained for such work, and present favorably to public estimation not only the music but the dramatic movement of whatever lyric drama they engage in. Their dialogue is not slighted for show off in solo, and therefore general attention is insured for all their performance.

The weak point in this enterprise is found in the orchestra, which having little previous acquaintance with the peculiar style of English opera and none with the performers, find great difficulty in obtaining that essential of their work by one rehearsal, even with Mr. Dietrich's remarkable skill and tact to accomplish them in it. With repetitions of each opera, this unavoidable hindrance to smooth and finished execution will undoubtedly be removed, and the chorus work together more efficiently in *ensemble* passages, some of them being also recently included with the company. After making this allowance for brief opportunity in preparation, those who have patronized the Richings' opera company, this week, have found good cause of satisfaction with the musical and dramatic entertainment they provided for the crowds in attendance. Few hesitate to pronounce it the best endeavor to revive opera in English version that has been witnessed here for many years. Misses Richings and Harrison, Messrs. Castle, Campbell, Peaks and Seguin are now more heartily appreciated than ever, as four months of constant work and cooperation in operatic performance, have given them a sympathy and dramatic purpose which their previous desultory efforts scarcely warranted the expectation of.

To analyse their performance in all these operas would require more space than is at our disposal, and the uniform merit they exhibited in all, really dispenses with specification of minute defects.

We can heartily commend this operatic series to unreserved patronage from all who enjoy good English version of genial, pleasant opera, deeming their satisfaction with its general presentment by the company now at the Olympic Theatre, assured by what they have already done in the way of pleasing their patrons. Those who favor performance of opera with sparkling dialogue in their own language, may with confidence improve this rare opportunity of witnessing its creditable presentment.

## THEODORE THOMAS'S SYMPHONY SOIRÉE.

Thomas's Third Symphony Soirée was given on Saturday evening last, before a fair but not a large audience; a fact which is a disgrace to the musical taste of the people of New York. Such a programme as was announced for that evening, should have attracted all the lovers of good music in the city. It was as follows: Suite, C, op. 101, Raff; "Ave Verum," chorus, Mozart; Overture, chorus, "Arise and Shine;" Chorale, "Sleepers, wake, a voice is calling," from Mendelssohn's St. Paul, and the D minor symphony No. 4, op. 120, by Schumann. This certainly presented a rare musical feast, which should have been enjoyed by a crowded audience.

Raff's "Suite," in four movements, is a smooth composition, not marked by inspiration or distinguished by strong characteristics, but containing many passages of quiet beauty, and special excellence in orchestral treatment. Its chief charm is in its varied partition, and the rich and delicate combinations and effects produced. We are glad to have heard the work, but we do not think it of sufficient strength to bear the test of frequent repetition. It was carefully and delicately played by the orchestra.

The "Ave Verum" was well sung by the the Mendelssohn Union, and was only not effective, because Mr. Wm. Berge, who conducted it, took the tempo one-half too slow, allowing it to trail its weary length along like some solemn dirge. It would be well if the insane ambition to conduct were accompanied with the power to do so properly, but such is not the case, and Mr. Berge must be added to the list of the incapable ambitious.

The grand, masculine overture to St. Paul was finely rendered by the orchestra; its broad and marked counterpoint was brought out in fine relief and with a vigor and brilliancy worthy of all praise. The choruses were taken up and maintained with spirit and decision, and the Mendelssohn Union did itself